

# Handling nicotine withdrawal

## What to expect when you quit smoking

If you quit smoking, you'll probably go through nicotine withdrawal. Each person reacts differently to withdrawal, but the good news is that after a few days or a couple of weeks the cravings will go away, if you stay tobacco-free. Here are some common questions about withdrawal and how you can prepare for it and deal with cravings.

### What is nicotine withdrawal?



As you smoke, your body and brain get used to having nicotine, which is an addictive substance. When you stop smoking, your body needs to get used to not having nicotine and you might feel uncomfortable. Some say it feels like having the flu.

### What are the common signs of nicotine withdrawal?



You may:

- Feel sad or blue, grouchy, irritable or restless.
- Have a craving to smoke.
- Have trouble sleeping or thinking clearly and focusing.
- Feel more hungry.

### How can I prepare for withdrawal?



Feelings of withdrawal are often the strongest during the first week after you quit smoking. So it's important to not slip up and smoke to feel better. One way to get ready for withdrawal and overcome cravings is to use nicotine replacement therapy, such as gum, lozenges or a patch.

Remember to set up a visit with your health coach on **LiveHealth Online Tobacco Free** so you can get support, such as nicotine replacement therapy and advice. You can also sign up for **SmokefreeTXT**, which is a text messaging service that sends you encouraging advice and tips to help you stop smoking and deal with withdrawal. You can choose how many messages to receive each day and when to start getting them. To sign up, go to [smokefree.gov/smokefreetxt](https://smokefree.gov/smokefreetxt) and follow the steps to start getting text messages.

## Is nicotine withdrawal dangerous?



While withdrawal can be uncomfortable, there's no health danger from it. Remember that by quitting smoking, you're doing the best thing for your overall health.

Some people feel sad or down when they quit smoking. If you get depressed or feel sad, let a friend or loved one know. You may need to talk with your doctor or a health care professional about your feelings.

## How long will I crave nicotine?



While the signs of withdrawal may go away, you may still have cravings for tobacco. A reminder, or trigger, might set off a craving. Triggers include places, people and other things that remind you of smoking. Most cravings only last for about 15 to 20 minutes so finding ways to deal with them is important. For example, you could go for a quick walk until the craving passes. You could also try nicotine replacement therapy to get through withdrawal and deal with cravings.

## Stay strong!

Remember that the feelings of nicotine withdrawal only last for a few days to a couple of weeks. So take some of the above steps to get ready and be resolved to quit smoking for good.



Source:  
Smokefree.gov website, *How to Manage Cravings* (accessed July 2018): [smokefree.gov/challenges-when-quitting/withdrawal/managing-withdrawal](https://smokefree.gov/challenges-when-quitting/withdrawal/managing-withdrawal).

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